Anti-Nixon Spies Accuse Committee

7/25/73

By Jules Witcover
Washington Post Staff Writer

Republican National Chairman George Bush yesterday made public three affidavits suggesting that the chief investigator for the Senate Watergate Committee had recruited spies to help defeat Richard M. Nixon in the 1960 presidential campaign.

The chief investigator, Carmine S. Bellino, who had worked in the 1960 campaign of John F. Kennedy, heatedly labeled the charges "absolutely false."

Among the charges in two of the affidavits was an allegation that Bellino had tried to hire men to bug a Washington hotel where Mr. Nixon was preparing for one of his 1960 televised debates with then Sen. John F. Kennedy.

"I categorically and unequivocally deny that I have ever ordered, requested, directed or participated in any electronic surveillance whatsoever in connection with any political campaign," Bellino said.

"By attacking me on the basis of such false and malicious lies," Bellino said outside the Senate Caucus Room while the Watergate hearings were under way, "Mr. Bush has attempted to distract me from carrying out what I consider one of the most important assignments of my life.

"I shall continue to exert all my efforts to ascertain the facts and the truth pertinent to this investigation," he said.

The affidavits came from two private investigators, Edward Murray Jones, now of the Philippines, and John W. Leon of Washington, who died 11 days ago; and Joseph W. Shimon, a retired Washington police inspector.

Leon and Shimon were convicted in 1964 in a wiretapping case in which a lawyer for the El Paso Natural Gas Co., in town for a Federal Power Commission hearing, found an electronic bug under a coffee table in his suite at the Mayflower Hotel.

Shimon, in his affidavit, said another man convicted in that case, Oliver W. Angelone, had asked him in late summer or early fall of 1960 to help him gain access to the top two floors of the Wardman Park Hotel (now the Sheraton Park) that Mr. Nixon planned to occupy, for the purpose of installing eavesdropping devices. Angelone told him he worked for Bellino, Shimon's affidavit said. Shimon said he declined.

Bush suggested, on the basis of this affidavit and one by Leon saying he was "confidest" Jones and Angelone "had bugged the Nixon space or tapped his phones prior to the television debate," that information obtained in this fashion on Mr. Nixon's debate preparations might have cost him the debate and the election.

Angelone, whose conviction later was reversed in the U.S. Court of Appeals on grounds that he had been granted immunity for testifying before a grand jury, flatly denied in a telephone interview yesterday that he had ever made such a proposition to Shimon. Angelone currently is regional director for compliance for the General Services Administration in New York.

Leon, in his affidavit taken June 8, said he was retained by Bellino during the 1960 campaign "to infiltrate the operations" of Albert B. "Ab" Hermann, who is a long-time Republican National Committee staff aide. After having failed "to penetrate the office operations" of the committee, Leon's affidavit said, he watched Hermann's office with field glasses and used "an electronic device known as 'the big ear' aimed at Mr. Hermann's window."

Leon's affidavit also said Jones had told him he had tapped the telephones of three ministers at the Mayflower in the fall of 1960. "Carmine Bellino suspected that these ministers were responsible for some of the anti-Catholic, anti-Kennedy literature that was distributed during the 1960 campaign," the affidavit said.

Angelone said Bellino did ask him during the 1960 campaign to try to find out where "a private individual" suspected of circulating anti-Catholic material was staying in Washington, and that he may have asked Shimon to help. Bellino said yesterday his job in the campaign was to trace anti-Catholic mail sent to then Senator Kennedy.

Bellino, in denying the charges, said that on one occasion he did try to have tailed a former Republican congressman whom he believed to have set up the ministerial meeting at which Dr. Norman Vincent Peale spoke. But the man he sent out, Bellino said, lost the congressman at National Airport.

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Jones, in his affidavit, said he was one of these asked to "pick up an individual" at the airport. He said he had participated in another surveillance in downtown Washington, but in both cases "I could not identify the subjects." Bellino, Jones said, "was present on one or both surveillances."

Leon's affidavit also said that in a discussion about one of the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debates among himself, John J. Frank, an investigator also convicted on the 1964 case, Angelone and another investigator whose name he could not recall, Angelone said that "Jonesy really did his job well this time."

"Although I did not participate in installation of eavesdropping devices and did not tape telephone lines for Carmine Bellino during the 1960 campaign," the Leon affidavit said, "I am confident that Ed Jones and Oliver Angelone successfully bugged the Nixon space or tapped his phone prior to the television debate."

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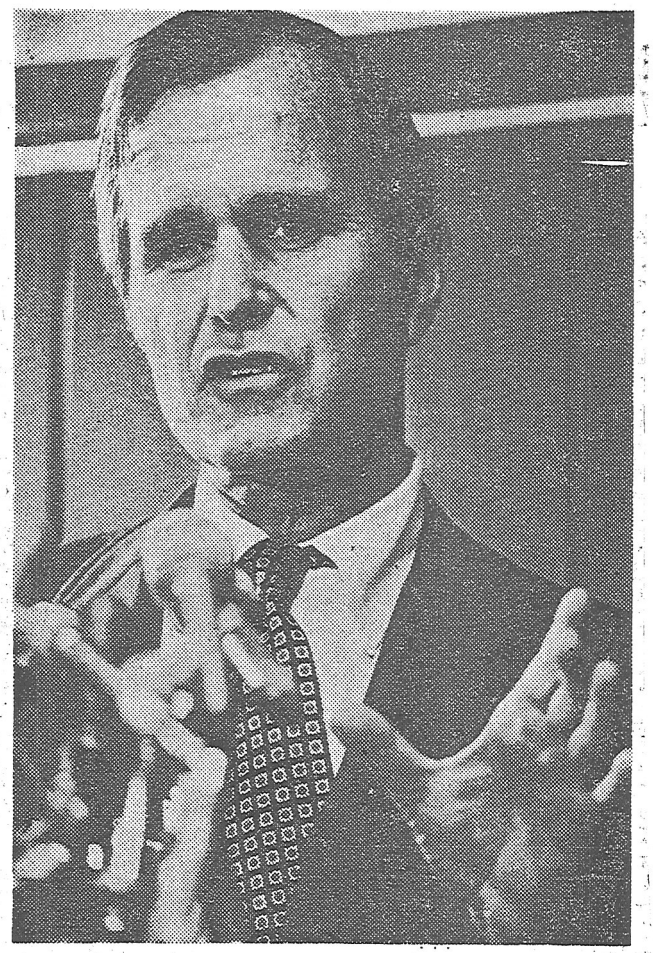
Bush, in releasing the affidavits obtained by Jerris Leonard, former assistant attorney general for civil rights in the Nixon administration, said he is "convinced that there is in fact substance to the alleraions." But he said also that "I cannot and do not vouch for the veracity of the statements contained in the affidavits."

If true, he said, they "could very well have affected the outcome of the 1960 presidential race. The Nixon-Kennedy election was a real cliff-hanger, and the debates bore heavily on the outcome of the people's decision."

Bush said he was not releasing the affidavits "to justify Watergate", but in the interest of "fair play." He called on Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.), chairman of the Senate Watergate committee, to investigate the charges against Bellino.

Bush said that prior to public release of the affidavits he had notified Ervin and Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.), the vice chairman, of his intention to do so. Bellino said yesterday he had discussed the matter with Ervin and Baker and had their support.



By James K. W. Atherton—The Washington Post

GOP Chairman George Bush: affidavits not "to justify Watergate," but in the interest of "fair play."